

Drivers are key to prevent crashes, save lives in work zones

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As Oregon enters the busy months for road projects, drivers will see more work zones. Watching for the color orange is a life-and-death priority for travelers and people doing the vital work on our roads.

“We are very concerned about road crew safety due to the higher traffic speeds we’re seeing across the country,” ODOT Director Kris Strickler said. “And it’s actually drivers and travelers who are injured and killed in work-zone crashes – far more than workers.”

From 2015 through 2019 – the latest complete data – there was an average of 584 total crashes each year in work zones, including:

- An average of five people (including one worker) died each year.
- An average of 25 people were seriously injured.
- A total of 540 injuries, including serious injuries above, each year.

Road crews use several technologies including automated flagging devices, mobile barriers and portable message signs to make work zones safer as we build a modern transportation system. Those are in addition to the traditional color orange for work zones – signs, cones and the vests road crews wear.

But road crews can't do it alone. Drivers must do their part to keep crews, themselves and their passengers safe.

How drivers can help save lives

As Oregon marks National Work Zone Awareness Week April 11-15, remember to slow down and expect delays whenever you see orange signs, barrels, cones and barricades – in work zones and the transition areas leading to them.

Drivers must use as much caution during hours when a work zone isn't active because there can be bumps, barriers and narrower lanes during the entire length of a project.

Work-zone crashes are preventable. Drivers must do their part to keep themselves, their passengers and people working on the roads safe:

- Pay attention when you see orange signs, barrels, cones and barricades and in the transition zone before the work area. An inattentive driver is the most common cause of work-zone crashes.
- Drive as if you work there – slow down, keep your eyes on the road and mind on the drive.
- Obey speed signs. Speed limits may be reduced to keep you and workers safe. Excessive speed is a major factor in all fatal crashes.
- Work zone traffic lanes often are narrow, without shoulders or emergency lanes.
- Move over to give workers more room when possible.
- Remember that fines doubles in all Oregon work zones, whether or not workers and signs are present.
- Plan ahead. Give yourself enough time for your trip, including potential work-zone delays. You can get current Oregon road conditions at [TripCheck.com](https://tripcheck.com) or by calling 511.